

APPROVED AS AMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**TOWN OF DARIEN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 18, 2004**

ATTENDANCE: Evonne Klein, First Selectwoman; Robert Harrel; Dr. Joseph Miceli; Barbara Thorne; Linda Santarella

OTHER: Seth Morgan, RTM; Callie Sullivan, District II representative; members of the Charter Revision Commission

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Klein called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

FIRST SELECTWOMAN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Klein provided highlights from her report. She said that the Area 9 Cable Council requested permission to film all public Board meetings and broadcast them on the cable channel. This would require the Board's approval. She said that David Devers would provide information at a subsequent meeting; the \$4,500 grant application would need to be submitted by December 31st.

Regarding the Heights Road flooding situation, First Selectwoman Klein said she attended a meeting on October 7th at Town Hall to discuss this. A possible solution would be to expand the culvert to make it more efficient. SWRPA is involved. The State says that the problem is not theirs. First Selectwoman Klein said that money would be sought for the repair from the State.

First Selectwoman said that Bob Steeger feels the flooding situation at Holly Lane is caused by a 36" pipe that appears to just end. He said he would prepare a proposal of what is needed and the cost involved and make a presentation to the Board at its next meeting.

First Selectwoman Klein said that the five-day program at the Senior Center is up and running, and it was very well attended on the first day.

In terms of general comments, and specifically about the budget, First Selectwoman Klein said she is hopeful there can be staffing changes at Town Hall regarding the way things are

organized. She said that the Park and Recreation Department is analyzing the position of a full-time EPC consultant. Lastly, regarding the role of IT and E-connect at Town Hall, were they being utilized to make things run more smoothly?

First Selectwoman Klein said that the former members of the Charter Commission were present for discussion. The RTM had a new chairperson. It was important for the Board to be more involved in the process of getting town residents to run for the RTM. Volunteer applications could be found on the website. She said that appointments are being looked at more closely. She said she is interested in what the Commission's goals are and what they have accomplished. A great deal of money is given to various commissions and it is important to find out what is being done with it. There are several objectives, and it isn't certain whether these are being met. She said that questions regarding SWRPA and the 20-year plan should be addressed to her.

First Selectwoman Klein said that she attended the Green Team meeting, and that she was interested in how different volunteer organizations would come together. She spoke about Darien's clean-up day and the hand-off to the Beautification Commission or Clean Team.

Regarding upcoming events, First Selectwoman Klein said that on October 19th there would be an RTM and a Board of Finance meeting. On October 25th there would be a public hearing on parking fees; on October 28th an employee's luncheon was scheduled. She spoke about the night out to discuss the CL&P and power project dispute.

NEW BUSINESS

Charter Commission re Charter Revision

First Selectwoman Klein said that members of the Commission were invited to discuss their experiences. She said that one of the priorities of the Commission was the need to make government more efficient. Ms. Santarella felt that the charge given to the former commission was a good one. She said that she pushed to bring this forward because she believed it was time to create a new commission, but felt strongly their charge should be similarly as broad as it was the last time. Veteran members of the community who had served in various capacities looked into the way government operated, interviewed others in community and researched the way surrounding towns operated with an eye toward getting a better perspective. After 2 years of hard work, she felt they offered a wonderful product. She said that before a new commission begins the former one should discuss what they didn't like about the way government was run. Ms. Thorne said that she didn't want a new commission to reinvent anything. The work done by the former commissioners was excellent, and she asked why it wasn't accepted by the town. She said that the Board approved the charge of the Commission and voted to take the whole product as a unit. She wondered why it was defeated. A member of the public said that it was difficult for the masses to grab onto a charter revision vote because it was not pertinent at the time. She said it should be timed to coincide with a vote for the selectmen. Last time there was low voter

turnout. She spoke about elected vs. appointed for the town treasurer and the town clerk. She said that there should be a clear line of authority, a checks and balance system on the Board of Finance. Mr. Harrel said that this was a good suggestion. He said that there isn't much that time has changed. It is still difficult finding people to be on the RTM. There are accounting and management problems with elected officials. Key issues are just as valid today as they were in the past. He felt strongly the community continues to be in need of charter revision but wondered how this should be communicated to the public. He said that the current document could be enhanced, but didn't feel there was a need for any substantial changes. He said that the RTM has gotten weaker rather than stronger. He said that Darien needs a strong legislative body.

A member of the public said that this item should be "sold" on the basis of operational accountability. First Selectwoman Klein said that she is objective, and hasn't been involved to any great extent. She said that the Board needs to decide how to approach the Charter Revision Commission. The current document should not be ignored. She said that she personally wants to see more responsiveness.

A member of the public said that an attempt was made to get the public more involved; public hearings were held, there were mailings and news articles. She also agreed that this should coincide with an election. She said that nothing radical should be done.

A member of the public said he didn't feel the Commission had enough support from the Board of Selectmen.

A member of the public said they began their work in 1996, and then in 1999 changes were made. Many of the issues from years ago continue to surface. Dr. Miceli agreed that the issue of accountability was more important now than in the past. A member of the public said that many years of research went into the current document. A member of the public said that if another commission is to be appointed the Board should provide a clear direction for them to follow from the beginning. Leadership from the Board was critical to the success of the Commission. The new commission should know what the Board's concerns are and what is wanted so that they don't have to start with a blank slate. They should focus on the organization chart that was prepared. A member from the Commission said that the new commission would start from scratch, and this would take a long time. The product already provided is a good one, but anyone new would want to start off according to their own thoughts. They would probably repeat what had already been started. The current commission provided a wonderful product to the Town. It was unfortunate that it failed short. Ms. Thorne said that it was difficult to determine whether it should be done in pieces or as a whole. A member of the public read a letter from another member asking that government should not be handled by referendum. Ms. Santarella asked if the current members would be willing to serve again. First Selectwoman Klein said that the Board could give a narrow charge that could be broadened as necessary. She said that it was her intent going forward to successfully meet guidelines. It was the charge of the CRC to sell the product to the community.

A member of the public felt that the product they put together was a gift to the Town. She asked the Board members for their thoughts before the process is begun again. A member of the public said that active people are needed ... a fresh commission with a fresh start. He said that it was a wonderful experience to have worked with those in public service, and it was disappointing not to have it approved. First Selectwoman Klein said that the Board needs to discuss this further and take action, and that she wanted to have this issue resolved before the year's end.

A member of the public said that he appreciated that the Board was willing to discuss this at length. He personally felt the work put forth toward the document was extremely good. There was a difference of opinion as to whether individual elements should be looked at or whether it should be viewed as a package. He felt that if an opportunity was given for the public to say no, they would. He said that he didn't want to see this happen again. He said that before the Board appoints a new commission they should look closely at what can be saved of the work already done. Ms. Sullivan said that the process of selling the new commission is very important, and the Board should be clear on what they want accomplished as well as what the final results should be.

Update on CL&P Glenbrook Cables Project

First Selectwoman Klein said that there would be a meeting on October 28th from 7:30-9:00 p.m. to discuss this further. She referred to the letter on evidentiary hearings that would be held in November. She said that a specialist knowledgeable about borings would investigate and research the information that CL&P provided. She said that the Board of Finance would be asked to appropriate additional resources beyond the \$20,000 that is available for the attorney. The cost might be as high as \$50,000. She said that if anyone knew of someone who could act as site counsel it would be helpful. She said that the intent is to protect the Town and alternate methods to what CL&P proposed are being looked at. CL&P answered all the interrogatories filed. There would be no funding available from the Chamber of Commerce. She said that the residents who live on Route 106 are very active and vocal and she does not want to pit one part of the community against another. The Board members agreed that First Selectwoman Klein should approach the Board of Finance for additional money.

Action on Shellfish Ordinance

First Selectwoman Klein said that the Shellfish Commission provided a good information packet of data received from the public hearing. Dr. Miceli said that he felt comfortable with the recreational section of the ordinance, but until the Coastal Water Advisory Commission completed their survey, the Board should delay their decision about the commercial section. Ms. Thorne said that the Board needed more information on this before they could render a decision. Ms. Santarella concurred that the Board was not yet ready to vote, but wanted to thank the Coastal Water Advisory Commission. First Selectwoman Klein said that the RTM needed to vote on this issue as well.

Grove Street Parking Lot

First Selectwoman Klein said that there were currently 107 parking spaces in the Grove Street lot. 89 of them have 3-hour limits. She said that she wanted input from commuters about the 59 spaces which would be lost in the new plan. She said that the buildings were expected to open in November or December, and that perhaps an agreement could be reached by then regarding the 59 spaces. Mr. Harrel said that in his opinion, two hours was sufficient for needed parking. First Selectwoman Klein disagreed, saying that two hours was not sufficient to eat lunch, shop and do errands. A recommendation was made to increase the time to three hours to allow enough time for those in the area to patronize all the local businesses. The intent is to encourage someone to park and walk, rather than driving to each stop, making the area more pedestrian friendly. She said that the Town of Westport has implemented three-hour parking. Dr. Miceli said that a two-hour time limit would increase the number of parking spaces because it would force turnover. Ms. Santarella said that the parking situation is different in Westport, and Darien should not compare itself. First Selectwoman Klein said that Darien needed to bring new life and people who are willing to stay for three hours. She did not want Darien to remain auto centric. She said that the Mechanic Street parking lot would be looked at as well, and perhaps bushes could be clipped back, lighting could be improved, etc. Parking as a whole could be reviewed. Dr. Miceli felt that people would still want to remain auto centric, and two-hours would allow greater turnover.

Budget Transfer

- ** MS. THORNE MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET TRANSFER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,931.**
- ** DR. MICELI SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Elections

- ** DR. MICELI MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING REAPPOINTMENTS:**
 - ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS – GARY GREENE (D) FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON 6/30/07;**
 - MONUMENTS ND CEROMINES COMMISSION – EUGENE WHITE (R) FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON 11/30/05;**
 - MONUMENTS AND CEREMONIES COMMISSION – CHARLES SCRIBNER ® FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON 11/30/06; AND**
 - HOUSING AUTHORITY – FRANCINE BUCHANAN (R) FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON 6/30/08.**
- ** MS. THORNE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

First Selectwoman Klein said that this item should be tabled until the next meeting.

**** MS. SANTARELLA MOVED TO TABLE APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES TO THE BOARD'S NEXT MEETING.**

**** MS. THORNE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no specific public comment.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- October 16, 2004 – Board of Finance Regular Meeting at 8:15 p.m.
- October 20, 2004 – Park & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
- October 21, 2004 – Operations Planning Committee Meeting at 12:00 p.m.
- October 25, 2004 – Public Hearing held by the Board of Selectmen at 8:00 p.m. in the Auditorium
- October 26, 2004 – P & Z Commission Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m.

**** MS. THORNE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Wiggins for
Telesco Secretarial Services